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APPLICATION SERVICE TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE UK: EXPERIENCE FOR UKRAINE

Annotation. In this article we will consider the operation of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) in the United Kingdom (UK). We will focus particular attention on the need for Ukraine to establish a similar single centralized information and communication portal for university access. This will help students avoid any damaging corruption and discrimination in the application and entrance system currently used to give access to the higher educational institutions of Ukraine.

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ФУНКЦІОНУВАННЯ СЛУЖБИ ПРИЙОМУ У ВИЩИХ НАВЧАЛЬНИХ ЗАКЛАДАХ ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНІЇ: ДОСВІД ДЛЯ УКРАЇНИ

Анотація. Розглядається функціонування об'єкта освітніх послуг (UCAS – служба прийому до університетів та коледжів) Великобританії. Акцентується увага на необхідності створення єдиного централізованого інформаційно-комунікаційного порталу для абітурієнтів з метою уникнення корупції та дискримінації при вступних іспитах до вищих навчальних закладів України.

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ФУНКЦИОНИРОВАНИЕ СЛУЖБЫ ПРИЕМА В ВЫСШИХ УЧЕБНЫХ ЗАВЕДЕНИЯХ ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНИИ: ОПЫТ ДЛЯ УКРАИНЫ

Аннотация. Рассматривается функционирование объекта образовательных услуг (UCAS – служба приема в университеты и колледжи) Великобритании. Акцентируется внимание на необходимости создания единого централизованного информационно-коммуникационного портала для абитуриентов с целью избежания коррупции и дискриминации при вступительных экзаменах в высшие учебные заведения Украины.

Problem Statement: Ukraine ranks 3rd in the table of the most corrupt countries in Europe [10]. The existence of corrupt practices and the discrimination in admission to higher education contradicts the European approach of equality and non-discriminatory conditions of education. Implementing an online university entrance portal similar to that in the UK will reduce inequality and stabilise the fundamental basis of the national education system.

Recent research and published knowledge: This was conducted over the past decade and studies on the Ukrainian higher education system have clearly identified the areas and procedures most vulnerable to corrupt practices. Discussions concerning this revolve mostly around the issue of bribery and the methods of eliminating it. M. Havronyuk emphasizes this in "the need to strengthen anti-corruption legislation in Ukraine, bringing it into line with European standards and the creation of effective mechanisms for combating corruption today" [9].

Scientists O. Tereshchuk, N. Kuznetsov and V. Kostenko provide a clear definition of the prevalent corruption in their publications. They consider it commonplace and it is "not only a legal, but also as a social, economic and moral phenomenon which is detrimental to the normal functioning of the moral and legal relations between society and state" [6, 7].

Corruption is increasingly recognized as a preeminent problem in the developing world. Bribery, extortion, fraud, 'kickbacks' and collusion have resulted in retarded economies, predator elites, and political instability. Robert Klitgaard in his research [1] provides a framework for designing anti-corruption policies, and describes through case studies how courageous policymakers were able to control corruption for the benefit of all.

Aim of the article: The aim of this article is to analyse the likely benefits of introducing an online portal for students applying to Ukrainian universities similar to the one in place for universities in the UK.

Main body: Every year since Ukrainian Independence, the number of university students has gradually increased. This is a clear indication of the popularity of higher education. The reason for this is the emergence of regional branches of state universities and an increasingly large number of private institutions. According to the analytical report from the International Foundation for Education Policy Research, "a key tool for ensuring equal access to higher education in state educational policy is the independent external assessment (IEA), which covers the vast majority of applicants in 2008 (pilot phase was launched in 2003)" [4]. Although the system does have some disadvantages, it is overall a successful and efficient mechanism. Thanks to IEA, evaluations are transparent and objective in accordance with a high level of anti-corruption assurance. Unfortunately, when entering the educational qualification of "Master" or a graduate school there are other enrolment procedures making corrupt schemes almost inevitable.

The experiences of European countries where procedures for licensing and accreditation are established demonstrate that Ukraine will significantly benefit from the introduction of new educational policies and regulations to drive up standards. Extensive improvement work is urgently required to raise the standard of service offered to students applying for higher education.

According to research conducted on student experience with the higher education institutions in Ukraine, half of the participants had suffered a clash

with corruption, the other half are familiar with those who have experienced the negative impact of corruption [4], including the most common corrupt practice of bribery.

There is a strong opinion that the reasons for the abundance of fraud in the educational system are weak institution governance, ineffective government policies and the activities of government bodies, an underdeveloped judiciary, parliamentary focus and the attitude of society as a whole. This is due mainly to slow legal and economic growth and traditions which are proving difficult to change.

Corruption is the biggest obstacle to economic growth and development. It is able to threaten progress in any sector. It devalues educational qualifications and introduces mistrust of contracts thus significantly damaging business and driving up costs. To avoid corrupt practices and discrimination, further improvement and modernisation of the educational system's quality assurance is needed. With this in mind there is an example below of the way a university entry portal operates. It is based on UCAS in the UK which is considered one of the most successful international models.

UCAS is an independent charitable organisation responsible for managing student applications for all higher education institutions in the UK. It began life in 1961 as the UCCA (Universities Central Council on Admissions) to streamline admissions, when the demand for higher education significantly increased and the Universities Council established a centralized service for student applications combined with an effective regulation process. The Council subsequently merged with other partner organisations and in 1993 became UCAS, the only service for those who wanted to enter UK higher education.

The aims of UCAS are:

- Help applicants make the right choice by providing the most up-to-date information and guidance about higher education programs;
- Help parents and others with information and guidance through the application process;
- Help educational organisations with advertising their services.

Nowadays UCAS handles more than two and a half million preliminary applications to three hundred and forty universities and colleges per year of which around six hundred and fifty thousand applications are from UK students.

The process of applying is quite simple; you do it online via the UCAS website. The applicant's account offers the ability to choose up to five programs/specialties from five different universities recognised by the UK government.

There is no need to send original copies of documents as all applications are submitted through the website using the online registration form. After it's submitted, the student can track their application on the UCAS site and the site sends alerts to the student when messages arrive.

The main requirement for the application process to work is Internet access. According to the statistics, the level of Internet use in the UK is 82% of the total population. If the applicant does not have access then they can visit their local library. There they can get access to Personal Computers and the Internet for a small charge or sometimes free and this is regardless of whether they are disabled or not. This means any problem of Internet access does not normally arise. For comparison, in Ukraine the percentage of Internet users is 43.4%. This is increasing significantly every year, putting the country in the top five in terms of Internet user growth. In fact, the development of this portal would be very timely [12].

The main part of the UCAS site is "How to apply". It has a built-in web-tool which is an application form in itself. All admission applications can only be submitted through the website. Only one application can be made per person and to no more than five higher education institutions that offering the student's preferred course. The admission applications are submitted each year at the same time, normally between mid-September to mid-January. However, many students try to make their applications as earlier as possible because course places are sometimes provisionally offered on a first come, first served basis. This is not always the case though, and it does depend on the institutions own rules. In any situation all applications should be registered by 15th January. Gradually, the response from each institution is received back give either an acceptance (a conditional offer) or rejection.

In order for the applicant to choose the higher education for which they wish to apply they must analyse the course choices and admission requirements. To find this information, they can study the web sites of the preferred universities, where they will find all the pertinent information. It is interesting, that applications need to be sent in to the universities before the final results are known by those graduating school. This means universities have to rely on the predicted marks from students to make conditional offer decisions. Exam results are announced around the UK on the same day, so no one has an advantage of being offered unconditional acceptance to a course earlier than others. The cost of the UCAS service is currently forty GB pounds (2014) to the applicant, which is approximately five hundred and twenty UAH.

After receiving the application form, UCAS sends a request to the applicant's school for confirmation of expected examination results. After receiving confirmation back, UCAS sends the request to the university to confirm a place for the student. Requests are sent to all the universities to which the student applied. Universities deciding whether to offer (usually) conditional places to students have access only to the predicted examination results. The personal details of a prospective student and their financial status remain unknown to the universities. Thus, the possibility of discrimination based on race, gender, age or physical ability is removed. If the results of final examinations meet the requirements of the university, the applicant is offered an

unconditional place. When there is strong competition for a particular course, universities can select the best examination results, arrange additional interviews or consider the applicants' personal statement before offering a place. In addition to the examination results of the subjects studied at school, some of the universities ask a school for character references. The highest rated universities such as Oxford or Cambridge set additional entrance exams and also pay attention to the student's interests and activities: leader's clubs, camps etc. The application processes for these universities start a year ahead, not six months as previously stated.

As you can see, each applicant has an equal chance and opportunity for admission to any higher education institution in the country. This is not the case in Ukrainian universities where admission preferences are restricted to certain categories of citizen stipulated by legislative acts. Examples might be: the children or relatives of employees in the education sector, gifted young people in the areas of sport or art, young children from families of local or the elite and people able to benefit from corruption.

Importantly, UCAS also provides services to funding organisations, government, schools, colleges, careers services, education unions and business organisations. Using data analysis UCAS is able to offer professional advice on choices, ideas for study and statistics, for example on who studies and from where. This can be used to offer comprehensive information to support both parents and prospective students in making choices or sold to interested businesses.

UCAS is an online service delivered professionally in terms of content and design. An example requirement: a web page should not be overloaded by text or pictures and links must be correctly represented. The simplicity and readability of each page means it takes only a few seconds to find the information the applicant needs. Thus a future student can find a university, course or program of their choice easily.

Applications are divided in two groups: local students (UK and European Union) and International students (all those who live outside the UK and EU). Courses aimed at international students can contain an additional English language course for those who need support. Programs are divided into academic, for bachelors and postgraduates, and sandwich courses that are supported by employers (in this case employers offer a job for 1 year, which is called a "year in industry" as part of the course).

UCAS pays a lot of attention to teaching courses. Especially popular are short term programs for teachers which have an annual application volume of around fifty thousand. These short-term programs are offered by institutions in different subjects and are designed for graduates to move into a teaching career. There are several specialist applications services such as the Graduate Teacher Training Registry, UK Postgraduate Application and Statistical Service and the Conservatoires UK Admissions Service for this.

Departments within UCAS are audit, financial, nominations and awards. One of the commercial departments of the organisation is UCAS-media, which provides services for production and placement of advertising for educational institutions. This service enables the institutions to promote their programs and student accommodation. In addition to online advertising the department offers services in e-mail marketing, social media advertising, direct marketing, event management. The income from this provides additional funding for the Admissions Service.

The Board of UCAS consists of twelve members, selected on the basis of skills, experience, expertise and knowledge in the fields of information technology, prompt delivery, university admissions, marketing and communications, finance and audit. Most of the members have a university degree and experience in higher education and industry.

Summary: A centralised portal helps to make the application process for those wishing to get a university degree simple, understandable, cost effective and decreases the effect of corruption.

Advantages of a UCAS style online service:

- The opportunity to choose online any approved course at any UK university;
- Automatically check the application before submission. This helps to avoid some common mistakes such as incorrect date of birth or wrong program code;
- Corrections may be made at any time before submitting the application;
- The applicant can download the completed application and see how it will appear to the recipient;
- The applicant has the opportunity to accept or reject proposals from universities online and be notified when updates are received;
- It saves time for applicants as they do not have to visit the Admissions Office at each university they choose;
- Avoids the costs associated with travelling in person to the universities;
- Clear and simple procedure with no hidden conditions or costs.

It is believed that implementing the UCAS model in Ukraine will significantly benefit the country's higher education system and facilitate a less burdensome integration of the Ukrainian higher education into the European higher education system. However, to achieve this it is necessary to introduce or improve the following:

- A focused and coherent policy on university entry;
- Changes aimed at modernising the education system;
- Adoption of relevant laws and regulations considered necessary;
- Public support for reforming education system;
- Higher education institutions support and assistance in implementing the project;

- Significant financial investment in the project, particularly in the early stages.

It is expected that gradually the project will become self-sufficient due to fees from applicants and revenue from advertising and other services;

- Central support and control of the project from the government and universities working together.

Conclusion: Corruption in higher education is attracting unwanted attention because of its prevalence and damaging effect. This affects not only those within it, but the perceived value of achievement of those passing out of it. Flawed government policy in the educational system requires correction and sustained practical steps to ensure continued improvement. In addition, there must be systemic changes to fight corruption, but this is only possible with the introduction of special measures. This program must include specific and effective practical tools designed to eliminate corrupt functions in the system and its governance. There must also be monitoring of the system that is open to public scrutiny to ensure that it is delivering what was promised.

It would be beneficial and cost effective for Ukraine to adopt this simple UCAS style model for higher education admissions. It is an example of best practice in European education and building a similar portal for Ukraine will help to avoid:

- Confusion for applicants when applying;
- Costly administration of applications by institutions;
- Wasted time for applicants having to travel to each place of study;
- Corruption and discrimination in the admission process benefitting all;
- Inefficient spending of public funds and poor allocation of resources;
- Loss of business confidence in the qualifications a student earns;
- Loss of time due to obstructions that reduce the efficiency of management.

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РЕЙТИНГОВЕ ОЦІНЮВАННЯ СОЦІАЛЬНО-ПОЛІТИЧНИХ НАСТРОЇВ ГРОМАДЯН У СТРАТЕГІЧНОМУ УПРАВЛІННІ

Анотація. Стаття порушує досить цікаві та важливі питання сучасної науки з державного управління та політології щодо використання рейтингової оцінки проблем та очікувань громадян у процесі стратегічного планування та прийняття державно-управлінських рішень. Розглянуто ряд можливих ситуацій та суспільно-політичні настрої щодо них у вигляді діаграм та запропоновано варіанти їх вирішень.

Ключові слова: громадська думка, держава, громадськість, державне управління, рейтинг.

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РЕЙТИНГОВАЯ ОЦЕНКА СОЦИАЛЬНО-ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИХ НАСТРОЕНИЙ ГРАЖДАН В СТРАТЕГИЧЕСКОМ УПРАВЛЕНИИ

Аннотация. Статья нарушает достаточно интересные и важные вопросы современной науки государственного управления и политологии по использованию рейтинговой оценки проблем и ожиданий граждан в процес се стратегического планирования и принятия государственно-управленческих решений. Рассмотрен ряд возможных ситуаций и общественно-политические настроения по ним в виде диаграмм и предложены варианты их решений.

Ключевые слова: общественное мнение, государство, общественность, государственное управление, рейтинг.